



African Literature Association

nkyin kyin ~ changing oneself: playing many roles

since 1975

An independent, non-profit professional society of scholars, teachers and writers dedicated to the advancement of African Literary Studies.

PRESIDENT

Anthonia Kalu

African American & African Studies
486 University Hall
230 North Oval Mall
Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210-1319
(614) 688-5779
kalu.5@osu.edu

Minister Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth
Minister of Culture and Sports
Ministry of Culture
Drottninggatan 16
SE-103 33 Stockholm, Sweden

VICE-PRESIDENT

Soraya Mekerta

Spelman College
350 Spelman Lane S.W., Box 286
Atlanta, GA 30314-4399
(404) 270-5552
smekerta@spelman.edu

May 24, 2012

DEPUTY VICE-PRESIDENT

Huma Ibrahim

English Literature Department
P.O. Box: 17505
UAEU
Al Ain, United Arab Emirates
humaibrahim4@yahoo.com

Dear Minister Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth:

We, the African Literature Association (ALA) and the Women's Caucus of the ALA, an organization of scholars, teachers, students and activists, are writing to express our vehement disapproval at Makode Linde's recent art installation of a cake depicting a naked African woman undergoing female genital mutilation. As an organization of literary scholars, we champion issues of artistic freedom and political expression, especially since both have been severely curtailed in the past and in some instances continue to be restricted by governments the world over. No one would strip Makode Linde of his rights to self-expression. However, in the case of this particular art installation, the lack of judgment on the part of Swedish government officials must be addressed. Art is not only created as personal self-expression, it has performative, political, and historical contexts that are activated when it enters the public realm and begins communicating to its audience. In the case of Linde's installation, we strongly object to the lack of historical perspective and sensitivity to African women—past and present, young and old—that this “social event” manifests.

PAST PRESIDENT

Lokangaka Losambe

Dept. of English
University of Vermont
400 Old Mill
Burlington, VT 05405
(802) 656-3423
lokangaka.losambe@uvm.edu

SECRETARY

Anne Carlson

Foreign Languages & Literatures
Mailcode 4521
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
1000 Faner Drive
Carbondale, IL 62901
(618) 453-5416
acarlson@siu.edu

Swedish government officials and, above all, the Swedish Minister of Culture, should have been highly sensitive to the racism and gender abuse to which African women historically have been subjected by white, European colonials and the predatory gaze of European audiences. In particular, there is a long history of racist and gendered subjection of African women: they have been enslaved, they have been put on display as “savage objects” in European capitals, and they continue to be used for commercial purposes as signs of the exotic Other. The laughter with which this art piece was received is shameful. Swedish government officials have shown a lack of historical awareness and a disappointing lack of sensitivity and tact in permitting Linde's art to be presented in such a social atmosphere of free-wheeling levity. Even the Association for African Swedes stated that the art installation “makes a mockery of racism.” The ALA and the Women's Caucus of the ALA denounce this conjunction of art and desensitized audience. We wish to go on record as an organization that is outraged by an audience reception that chooses to ignore the historical facts of white European racism and its continued political reality in the present.

TREASURER

Fahamisha Patricia Brown

Metropolitan College of NY
ACSHE
431 Canal Street
New York, NY 10013
(212) 343-1234, ext. 2419
ALATreasury@mcny.edu

JALA EDITOR

Abioseh Porter

Dept. of English & Philosophy
Drexel University
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 895-2448
abiosehp@drexel.edu

39TH ALA CONFERENCE

College of Charleston, Charleston, SC

March 20-25, 2013

Simon Lewis

lewiss@cofc.edu

desensitized audience. We wish to go on record as an organization that is outraged by an audience reception that chooses to ignore the historical facts of white European racism and its continued political reality in the present.

Sincerely,

Anthonia Kalu

Anthonia Kalu, PhD
President, African Literature Association
Professor
Department of African American and African Studies
The Ohio State University
486 University Hall
230 North Oval Mall
Columbus, OH 43210-1319
United States of America

Dr. Huma Ibrahim,
President, Women's Caucus of the African Literature Association (WOCALA)
Department of Literature and Linguistics
College of Arts and Sciences
Qatar University
P. O. Box 2713, Doha,
State of Qatar

Dr. Helen Chukwuma,
Immediate Past President, WOCALA
Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages
Jackson State University
1400 Lynch Street
Jackson, MS 39217
USA

Dr. Catherine Kroll,
Vice President, WOCALA
Department of English
Sonoma State University
1801 E. Cotati Avenue
Rohnert Park, CA 94928
USA

Dr. Joya Uraizee,
Secretary, WOCALA
Department of English
St. Louis University
221 N. Grand Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63103
USA

Dr. Fahamisha P. Brown,
Treasurer, WOCALA
Audrey Cohen School for Human Services and Education
Metropolitan College of New York
431 Canal Street
New York, NY 10013
USA

cc: Honorable Fredrik Reinfeldt
Prime Minister of Sweden